



Porch Light

TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER

FALL

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Brad Montgomery

TORRES SHELTER

101 Silver Dollar Way, Chico, CA 95928
 Office Hours: 12:00 – 5:00 PM
 Monday – Friday
 Phone: (530) 891-9048
www.chicoshelter.org
www.facebook.com/TorresShelter

People Helping People News!

Thank you People Helping People (PHP) team! Our 2010 goal is to have PHP cover \$10,000 of our monthly expenses. Please help us reach our goal—join PHP on our website, or call us for a PHP authorization form. We need you!

NEWS FROM TORRES SHELTER...

Join us for our 8th Annual Christmas Tree Auction & Holiday Festival!

This fun and very important fundraising event will be held on Saturday, November 20th. See the flyer inside for more details.

Volunteers Painted the Shelter! A huge thanks to all the **Love Chico** volunteers who worked so hard to get the outside of the Shelter painted on a very hot day. Thanks to our guests and staff who pitched in and did a lot of the work too! Read more inside.

SHARES Cards—Do you shop at FoodMaxx or Save Mart? If so, please contact us to get a Torres Community Shelter SHARES Card. Before you pay for your groceries, hand the grocery checker your SHARES card and these grocery stores will donate up to 3% of your purchases back to the Shelter! You don't have to register, and it doesn't cost you a thing! We're excited about our new cards—they've been designed specifically for us. Please call 891-9048 to get a card mailed to you or stop by the Shelter and pick some up—hand them out to your family and friends!

National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week is November 14th – 20th.

Each year, during the week before Thanksgiving, an annual nationwide effort is made to bring greater awareness to hunger and homelessness in our country. Watch for events in our community.

Giving Back to the Community! For close to a decade, the Torres Community Shelter has been participating in the annual Butte Environmental Council Creek Clean Up. This year's clean up had more than 150 volunteers and collected more than 5 tons of garbage from our creeks. Not all of the garbage collected is from people who are homeless staying at the creeks, but a lot of it is. This was the first year that I, as the E.D. of the Shelter, participated and it was illuminating. I've been at these encampments multiple times before but this was the first time I was there as part of a team to clean them up. It's heartbreaking to see these beautiful areas full of trash and it's heartbreaking to see human beings living this way. At the same time, I'm glad I was a part of it and I'm proud that year after year, guests from our Shelter make up one of the largest volunteer groups that participate in this annual event. —Brad

Letter from the Executive Director

As the Executive Director of the Torres Community Shelter I have the opportunity to give tours of our facility. We also have other staff and volunteers that can give these tours but, whenever I can, I do these tours myself. I'm eager to because I really enjoy them and I'm quite proud of what we accomplish everyday at the Shelter. Talking about what we do energizes me as much as it does our visitors. I also see the reactions of people when they find out a little more about what we do and, frankly, their reactions are often priceless.

The most consistent comments I receive after the tours are "I had no idea how complex this is!" and "This place wasn't what I expected." I understand that people have preconceived notions of what an emergency homeless shelter is. I'm glad that our Shelter consistently surpasses these expectations. Just to be clear, we don't do anything special to prepare for these tours. They are often impromptu. People come through and see us with our blemishes intact and exposed for anyone to see.

I honestly wish that we could have the entire 200,000+ population of Butte County stop by for a tour because I believe after everyone in our County had a firsthand experience at the Shelter, we'd never have to worry about funding our basic services again and could focus exclusively on the additional programs we need to expand our reach.

We serve so many people (over 600 in the last 12 months!) and the labels and stereotypes regarding homelessness really don't apply when you're working with real live people with their own complete histories, weaknesses and dreams. How can one facility accommodate the complexity of needs for so many? Examples: How does someone who has worked all their life and has just been hit by the economy interact with someone just released from jail? How do we ensure a safe environment for more than 50 kids per year while still being a place where a meth addict can get a second chance? How do we handle a potentially ugly breakup of a married couple when they both are living with us? Or in very basic terms, who gets the bed closest to the bathrooms when you have elderly men who need walkers, or people with Cerebral Palsy or Muscular Dystrophy or a woman that hears voices and sometimes needs to go to the bathroom just so she doesn't scream and wake everybody? All of these are decisions and scenarios we need to deal with in order to have a smooth running Shelter.

There are some that would like to write off everyone we serve at the Shelter as worthless. Of course I bristle a little at this, but I understand where it comes from. Some of our guests have made poor choices and people do need to be held accountable for their actions. At the same time, whether someone "deserves" to be staying at an emergency shelter or not has very little to do with our day to day operations. For us it's pretty simple; people are here, homeless and don't have another safe place to go. We'd rather have the 600+ people staying with us where we have a chance to help them break the cycle of homelessness, than have that many more people living outdoors throughout our county. We provided more than 25,000 nights of stay over the last 12 months and we're proud that every one of those nights with us was a night that an individual didn't sleep at one of the creeks or behind a warehouse building or in someone's backyard. With this economy, the number of people we serve continues to escalate dramatically; my staff continues to rise to the occasion. Please help us continue our work.



Thank you.
Brad Montgomery, Torres Shelter Executive Director
opwindows@aol.com

Porch Light

Just the Beginning...



Hi my name is Jeri. Almost a year and a half ago I fell on hard times. Well it had been a few years of hard times and not always making the best choices for myself. I was soon at a crossroads of needing to make a change for the better and getting on stable ground again. I didn't have a place to call home just then so I came to the Torres Shelter and found the beginning of my new life. Some people would think of a homeless shelter as a last resort and hitting rock bottom. I found it as a chance to make a new beginning for myself and to start over because there is no real future in the street life and the people around it—this I knew.

I was nervous when I first came to the Torres Shelter because I didn't know what to expect. However, I soon found inspiration in the staff because they took an interest in me and always encouraged me to get on the right track. They provided me with resources in our community for things like jobs and clothing. But more importantly we created a game plan for me to re-establish my life.

I made visits to local agencies and I now had a physical address to receive mail again. I had gotten back in touch with the world and wasn't just slipping through the cracks.

The Torres Shelter gave me all the right tools to succeed. I put my footwork into follow through to the best of my ability each and everyday. Everyday was a new day for me to accomplish something else on my To-Do list and I had so much energy and drive to make it and be a success. My self esteem started to shoot back up and I was excited about life again. I knew that if I put enough effort in I could accomplish my goals and nothing would hold me back. The thoughts that used to hold me back I wasn't going to let hold me back anymore. I used to think that I couldn't make it because I did not have supportive people behind me. I did not have a stable place to live, or a job. I did not have the self confidence to "make it", and I did not feel smart enough or good enough anymore. The staff at the Torres Shelter was the supportive encouragement I needed to change all that. They helped me find my self confidence again and for that I am truly grateful.

Now I am going to be giving back the greatest gift I could ever imagine. I wanted to volunteer here at the Torres Shelter, and instead I just got hired to become part of their staff. A year and a half ago, I had no idea how good life could be again. I just tried to do my best everyday to stay focused. Success isn't just handed to you...it's something you have to work for. The Torres Shelter helped me help myself and I would like to say thank you to all the staff members here for helping me achieve so much. I am also thankful for this opportunity to help others who are in need. I believe I have truly been given a new beginning. —Sincerely, Jeri

A Note from a Previous Guest

The Torres Shelter has been a great temporary home for me and my husband. The staff is very helpful and supportive to all the guests. They provided us with everything we needed. They always greeted us with a smile. They always made me feel comfortable and feel at home. My husband and I would have never been able to take care of all the business we had to if it was not for the Torres Shelter staff who welcomed us and sheltered us for many months. I appreciate everything that the staff and volunteers of the Torres Shelter did. To the staff at the Torres Shelter...love you all. —Christina 😊

Looking Back

Hello Shelter Supporters,

My Chairmanship with the Chico Community Shelter Partnership Board of Directors is over. What a jam-packed two years it has been! We've gone from no money and debt hanging over our heads to a small monetary cushion and no debt. We also progressed from no Executive Director to an experienced, workaholic Executive Director. And, I must say, the latter attribute is very necessary as he wears many hats and is barraged with high expectations. These changes have fostered many improvements in the services provided to the homeless citizens of our area.

More succinctly put, we're in a better place than we were two years ago. **It is imperative that I take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you who have given your time, energy, money and goods/services to the Torres Community Shelter. We truly could not have survived without you. And we continue to need your help in the future.**

Our future is not secure. Our biggest issue is funding and, unfortunately, governmental funding opportunities are dwindling. The small monetary cushion I mentioned earlier could be gone in a very short time with a slump in donations. A huge amount of time is spent pursuing funding possibilities—competitive grants, fundraising events, donor campaigns. We are very lean administratively, with only six Board members and the Executive Director to perform administrative functions for the organization, including fundraising.

Almost two years ago, we started our People Helping People (PHP) donor campaign. We thought it would be easy—such a simple concept. If just 3,000 people, families and/or businesses would give at least \$10 each month to the Shelter, our basic monthly expenses would be covered and we would have a sustainable, local funding base. Our energies and time could then go in search of funding to add and improve services to help our guests become self-sufficient rather than spending so much time raising money just to pay the bills.

But, it hasn't been as easy as we originally thought. So, if I could ask just one thing of you for the Shelter's future well being, it would be this. **Please join our People Helping People Team or, if you have already, urge a friend or family member to join us.** Just contact the Shelter or go to our website to find out the many ways you can make your PHP donation. We truly can't do it without you!

Our new Chairman is Karen Betenbaugh and I know she will do a great job as we continue forward. She's high energy and focused. It was primarily through her diligence that we recaptured the Federal Emergency Shelter Grant last year—a 2-year competitive grant of \$100,000 each year. It was huge for us! She's responsible for our newsletter and our new website. Karen has a huge heart and has great empathy for the plight of people who are homeless. We're very fortunate that she has stepped into the lead position. I will continue to be intricately involved in the organization in my new position as Secretary/Treasurer.

Thanks again for your support. I wish I could shake your hand!

Sheryl McWatters, Secretary/Treasurer
Past Chairman

Moving Forward—with a New Board Chairman

It's so exciting to be involved with this compassionate, amazing organization. I became involved with the Shelter a few years back when funding was such an issue because I couldn't stand the thought that a homeless shelter could go under in our community. We are so far ahead of where we were then, thanks to all of the people that work at the Shelter (my heroes!) and so many people who donate their time and money to ensure we continue to be a vital, dynamic organization. Thank you Sheryl McWatters for your two years of amazing leadership—your leadership is a big part of why we're still here and why we're stronger than ever.

Am I nervous about taking over as Board Chair—YES! Everything about the Torres Community Shelter is complicated and challenging! My focus will continue to be on stabilizing our funding...everything we do, EVERYTHING, hinges on a stable source of funding for the Shelter, so that's got to be a priority. Another equally important priority will be to work to ensure we are helping our guests move forward with their lives and that their time here will be empowering, encouraging, motivating and dignified—that staying at the Shelter won't be a low point for them, but a starting point. I also want to continue to ensure that our public image is professional and compelling through our website, the newsletter, and Facebook. Our public image helps potential guests, supporters, and other agencies know who we are and what we do, and it helps to bring in donations from the community, which are vital. Finally I want to continue to work at making this a great place to work...I want staff to be proud of what they do here, and I want people knocking at the door to work or volunteer here because our programs are so successful and well run.

It's a tall order and here's what I'm going to use to stay focused: Are our guests moving forward? Are we moving forward as an organization, as an employer, as a driving force in our community in helping people who need it? I think that as long as we are moving forward, we will always be headed in the right direction.

In closing, I want to share a selfish reason for wanting to stay involved. I came to this organization wanting to help people and something unusual happened to me. I'm not the same person...the Shelter helped me too! Recently I sat for a long time talking with someone on the street, someone that was homeless, someone that years ago I would have walked past with my eyes averted. What's changed? My perception, compassion, understanding and connection to people have all changed for the better because of what I've seen and learned here as a volunteer for the Torres Community Shelter. That's why I'm excited to be heading up the Board of Directors for this next year. That's why I'm involved. We are all people—how can we not get involved?

—Karen Betenbaugh, CCSP Board Chairman

Crisis Intervention Training

The Torres Community Shelter has been participating with a police training program called Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). This program was created by a retired police officer to assist first responders to more effectively deal with people who are in an acute mental health crisis. The basic concept of CIT is that the safety of the police officers and an individual in distress is better protected with a more informed approach. Our first CIT training certified 24 local police officers. If you know someone that is in mental health crisis and you need to call 911—please ask if a CIT officer can respond. We don't have enough officers trained yet for 24/7 coverage; but when they can respond, the difference in outcomes can be extraordinary. If you have any questions about CIT, you can email brad@chicoshelter.org and he'll forward them to the appropriate individuals.

Staff Notes—Articles Written by or About our Staff

After working for Hewlett Packard for 25 years, I decided to take early retirement. I took a year off and I was too young to retire financially, so I needed to find a job that would provide me some income and keep me busy. A little over 3 years ago I came upon the ad for the position of Shelter Monitor at Torres Community Shelter. I applied not knowing what I was getting myself into, as all I had known of homelessness was in the movies and what I experienced as a child growing up in San Francisco.

I was totally shocked when I walked into Torres Shelter, as I expected to see cement walls, odors etc. What I saw amazed me, and I knew it was for me. I had my interview and a couple of days later I got the call from the Executive Director with a job offer and I accepted.

This job has been the best thing that ever happened to me. I work with a great team of people and have the honor of helping to impact hundreds of lives every year. I have led a very fortunate life and to now be able to help others is like a dream come true. This job enables me to see people, our guests, come into the Shelter at a time they are at their lowest, and be able to provide the support, structure and stability to them. The job has its moments, but the most treasured moments are those where I can watch someone come into our Shelter for services, kick addictions, stabilize their mental illness, find a job and be able to move into their own housing. To see someone who is proud of what they've accomplished, of who they have become is the most rewarding experience you can feel in a job like this one.

I have been the Shelter Supervisor for a little over a year now and over time I have discovered that I do not do this job for the pay or the kudos for what I do. I do this job for every person who walks through our doors looking for help, who needs a person to listen, for the families, the children and the outcomes that come down the road. —Louise

Louise Meyerfeld is our Shelter Supervisor. She's an extraordinary person with a heart full of boundless compassion and patience for everyone she encounters. She's currently on a medical leave and we're waiting to find out when she can return to us. No one at the Shelter is irreplaceable, but Louise comes about as close to that distinction as possible. It's not only that Louise gets a lot of things done at the Shelter, it's also that she does them without ever losing focus on why we're here—to help our guests move up!

A Guest Speaks Out

I'm very thankful that this place is here. The staff does an outstanding job at addressing our needs and they make sure it is an enjoyable time for being in a homeless shelter. Thank you to all. —James

A Note from Catalyst

Thank you for consistently and graciously meeting the needs of our community members. Catalyst has often called you to house a resident who many not be appropriate for our services—and you seem to consistently welcome people who have mental illnesses and need a place to stay. We ♥ you!

—Molly Heck, Catalyst Director of Client and Housing Services

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VOLUNTEER AND EVENT NEWS!

AN EAGLE SCOUT

For those that have been out to the Shelter, this will come as no surprise. The building that we have is fantastic and is standing up well after 7 years. But our 120 bed facility doesn't have everything we need. For example, we serve 25,000 meals per year without a kitchen, stove or dining room. We also need an outdoor children's play area for the 50 or so children that we expect to serve each year. We would also like to start offering accommodations for pets for those living on our streets with animal companions.

One of our other needs is storage. Storage doesn't excite many people and so this type of project is often the last to get done, even though it is a real need that people understand! Donating to provide additional storage for the Shelter so that we don't have to forfeit valuable space dedicated for another purpose like bed space is never going to resonate with people as much as a playground for kids or a safe place for animals.

Ironically, we are going to make progress on our storage needs before we address our other needs. The reason is because of a young man called **Spud Chelson**. Spud wants to be an Eagle Scout. He heard we had storage issues at the Shelter. He contacted us and offered to build us a storage shed. To be completely honest, we were a little bit like—"yeah right, thanks kid." How often does a 17-year old offer to design and construct a building for you? But Spud is persistent and motivated, and it soon became obvious that he was serious and competent. Spud designed the shed, thought about what types of materials he would need to use to ensure its longevity, worked with us to ensure that we were honoring our codes and usage permits and started building on Sat., Sept. 26th. Half the shed went up in a few hours with just Spud, a few family members and some other scouts. His efforts gave us a 100 square foot storage facility completed on October 4th! Thanks Spud!

8TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE AUCTION AND HOLIDAY FESTIVAL

Please join us for this very fun and important fundraising event, which will be held on Saturday, November 20th. Bid on beautifully decorated Christmas trees if you choose, or bid on any number of fabulous silent auction items that have been donated. There will be wonderful live entertainment, and of course, the food is fabulous and so is the company! It's a fun night and an easy way to help support the Torres Community Shelter. The event will be held at the Masonic Family Center starting at 6:00 pm. Please see the enclosed flyer for more details or call the Shelter at 891-9048.

ANOTHER GIFT OPTION TO SUPPORT THE SHELTER

We feel that it's important to provide for the long-term financial security of the Shelter and the work we do here. If you feel the same, please consider a planned gift! This can include naming the Shelter in your will or a living trust when doing estate planning and/or establishing an endowment for the Shelter in your name. Please e-mail Brad Montgomery, our Executive Director, at brad@chicoshelter.org with any questions. Please know that all inquiries will remain confidential until the potential donor directs otherwise. We've maintained the Shelter financially for more than twelve years operating with only a few months of cash reserves at a time; we need to ensure that our services are available long-term! The following is a list of planned gift ideas for people that may want to make a planned gift to the Shelter:

- Will or Living Trust
- Securities
- Life Insurance
- Retirement Accounts—IRA, Keogh, 401(K)
- Remainder Interest in Personal Residence, Vacation Home, Condominium, or Farm
- Real Estate

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Chico Community Shelter Partnership
Torres Community Shelter
101 Silver Dollar Way, Chico, CA 95928

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GREETINGS FROM THE TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER!

Some Recent Statistics:

- > We welcomed **221** guests during July, August and September.
- > These guests included **19** children and their **9** families.
- > One of the most significant statistics we track at the Torres Shelter is called “nights of stay”—a cumulative tally of our nightly guests. In the last three months, **we’ve provided overnight shelter 6,677 times** to people who had nowhere else to stay.

Our Wish List—It’s going to be a cold, wet winter and we really need the following items:

- > Heavy Duty Rain Ponchos, Water Resistant Jackets, Sturdy Umbrellas & Gloves—To keep our guests dry.
- > Blankets—We are down to just a few extra blankets!
- > Medicines like Sudafed, cough drops & cough syrup, ibuprofen, Tums, Pepto-Bismol—So guests feel better.
- > Large Sized Canned Goods—Soups, chili, beans & stews are especially appreciated during the winter ahead.
- > Personal Hygiene Items—We need toothbrushes, razors, body wash, deodorant, shampoo, & conditioner.
- > Towels and Washcloths—These items are used so much at the Shelter that they wear out quickly!
- > Plastic Eating Utensils—As you can imagine, we go through a lot of eating utensils.
- > Cleaning Supplies, Laundry Soap—Donations of these items really help stretch our budget.
- > 4-line Business Telephones & Office Supplies—Our 2-line telephones just aren’t adequate!

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